FACTS AND INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF CAPT. CHARLES T. DERRY, 1898

This is a copy of a book written by Dwight Perry's great grand father.

Dwight has the original. This book concerns many Sharon references especially the area on So. Main St. where the Kendalls have their Red Barn.

Dwight lives at 30 S. Walpole St.
Sharon, Mass.

FACTS AND INCIDENTS

IN

. . THE LIFE . .

OF

CAPT. CHARLES T. DERRY.

Compiled
From Dictation by his Daughter-in-Law,
NELLIE H. DERRY.

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CAPT. CHARLES T. DERRY.

FACTS AND INCIDENTS CONNECTED WITH THE LIFE OF CAPTAIN CHARLES T. DERRY.

Through the influence of my friends and family, I have been induced to submit, in part, some of the incidents and trials of my life, and as far as possible, to state the different contracts of seawalls and wharves that I have taken and completed.

Altogether my life thus far, has in its later years been successful. My early life had in it many hardships, and my success has been through hard work, and the ladder to success has been climbed round by round.

I hope when this little book is looked over in future years, that it may prove to some one an inspiration to work on, and to remember that it is not always necessary to be provided with money and education to succeed in life, but if one is willing to work hard, and improve every opportunity, that it will go a long way towards accomplishing whatever they undertake.

I was born in Quincy, March 10, 1828. At the age

of nine years I began to realize my circumstances in life. I was then living at Quincy Point, and was the oldest of five boys; my father was sick in consumption, and my mother was obliged to go out washing five days in the week in order to maintain the family.

About this time, I remember going to several houses every Saturday to collect the dry swill, such as potato-peelings and dry bread, for a man that kept a pig, and who paid me a few cents for doing it. At one house, Mrs. Bryant Newcomb's, the last on the route, I would find very carefully laid on top of the bucket, the crust, cut from brown bread which had been baked in a brick oven. It was a great treat to us boys, and any one sitting down to a turkey dinner, could not enjoy it any better than we did. When I tell you that many a night we went to bed with only a cracker that my mother would bring home to us after her day's work, you will understand why the brown bread was such a feast for us.

At about the age of ten we moved from Quincy Point to Houghs Neck, to what is now called the Littlefield Farm. At that time it was owned by Charles Spear, and he employed my father to look after the work and men; he being able to do that, but not any heavy work. I remained with my family there about one year when a farmer and bootmaker, named Howard, from Abington, who came to Hough's Neck every year for a load of seaweed, took me at nine o'clock one night, and arrived at his home at

one o'clock in the morning; as he was a very hard drinking man, and bought a gallon of rum on his way home, one can imagine that my position was not a very enviable one. This was the first night that I had ever been away from home.

I did not see my people again for a year, and that was when Mr. Howard made his annual trip for seaweed; and I was allowed to remain a few hours, and then went back and stayed another year with him.

During the two years I was there, I had to milk five cows and take care of a horse; through the summer time I worked on the farm; during the winter I was supposed to go to school three months, and the rest of the time, and evenings while I attended school I had to fit boots. As I said before, Mr. Howard was a very hard drinking man, and at times very unreasonable. I had been fitting eight pairs of boots a day, and one Sunday morning when he was uglier than usual, he told me that unless I fitted twelve pairs of boots each day the following week, he would give me a flogging Saturday night; and I would have gotten it too, as he meant what he said. I knew it was impossible for me to do any more, so I went into my bed-room and put my shoes and stockings out of the window, then bundled up my clothes and started for Quincy, thirteen miles away. I finally made up my mind that I would not go back again. The next day Mr. Howard came for me, but it did no good, as I would not go with him.

My father remained at Hough's Neck for three years. His health had been constantly growing worse, and he was obliged to give up his situation, and move back to Quincy, where he was confined to the house about three years before he died.

After I left Abington, I went to live with Mr. James Arnold, a butcher and cattle dealer; I remained with him about five years, or until I was eighteen years old. I received twenty-five cents per day and my board while I was there; this money paid for my mother's house rent and flour. During my stay there I had some queer experiences, as part of my work was to drive cattle from all the surrounding towns, and I had to go to Brighton every Monday to drive home the cattle that Mr. Arnold bought there. Of course I had some very ugly cattle to manage. I will mention two incidents that come to my mind.

One Tuesday Mr. Arnold bought a very ugly bull, and I went up to Brighton to bring him home. When I arrived there, the man who had had the whole care of him for a year, brought him out to me with a ring in his nose and a long pole attached to it. He passed the pole to me and I asked him to take the ring out of his nose; for reply he said: "If I take the ring out of that bull's nose he will kill you, and every one else on the street." I insisted upon his taking it out, and told him that if the bull was ugly, I would rather have him in front of me

YOUNG DERRY'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE UGLY BULL.

where I could see him, instead of leading him behind me like a dog, as I could take care of him better. He still hesitated, and would not take the ring out, until finally, Mr. Arnold told him to take it out of his nose, and the boy would take care of him. The keeper, and others that were there, went inside of the fence and shut the gate. The keeper led the bull up to the fence, and reaching over, unfastened the ring, and let the bull loose. I think that there never was a Spanish bull fight, with all their men and horses, where there was an uglier bull, or a rougher time than I had, all alone with this one.

I will describe the whip that was used to drive cattle with in those days. It was called a black snake, and was made of rawhide, In the butt of the whip was a round piece of lead about a foot long, and one and a half inches in diameter, and braided in with rawhide; the rawhide and lead were then covered with very thick cowhide leather. The whole when completed, made of course, a very strong weapon; it was very necessary that it should be, in order to handle some of the ugly animals, for if it had broken I should have been perfectly defenseless.

The condition of the bull with his bloodshot eyes, and blood coming from his nose showed that he had come in contact with something more than an ordinary whip.

When the old fellow found himself loose, he threw his head high in the air and gave a tremen-

dous snort, then lowering his head, he began to bellow, and with a terrific *Boo-oo-oo!* he made a plunge for me. I hit him right across the nose with the butt of the whip. Every time he made a dash for me I had to jump, first one side, and then to the other; and every time I hit him a good blow with my whip. He accompanied every attack with one of his terrible bellows.

If I had run from him he would have conquered me, but by my jumping to one side he was obliged to turn each time. After awhile I could hit him two or three times instead of once. It took me about thirty minutes to conquer him, and then he was glad to submit to my will.

During these few minutes there had gathered about the place between one hundred and fifty and two hundred people. After I had conquered the creature I started for Quincy with him alone. I had to be very careful all the way, for every one he met he was anxious to tackle, and I had to run between them to head him off. We got along nicely until he saw a woman crossing the street with a red shawl on, in Quincy; this was more than he was willing to stand, and he lowered his head, and started for her, bellowing as usual. It frightened her so that she stopped, and I had to run, and got between them just before he reached her; as soon as he saw me he was as submissive as before, and the rest of the journey was accomplished without further difficulty.

About this time Mr. Alpheus Spear, a cattle dealer, came into the slaughter-house one day while we were

killing beef cattle for the next day's marketing. He asked Mr. Arnold if he could get me to go to Weymouth to drive home a cow that he had bought, as he was so busy that he could not spare his boy, and wanted the cow that day. Mr. Arnold told him that I might go as soon as the cattle was ready for market. He had bought the cow of a Mr. Lowger in W[redacted]out three miles from Quincy.

When I arrived I asked Mr. Lowger to let the cow out into the street; he inquired of me what I intended doing with her. I replied that I was going to drive her home to the man that had bought her. He then told me that the cow was very wild, and that it would be impossible to get her away from the barn. He also told me that Mr. Spear had been over with his boy, and had spent a half day trying to get her started, but not being able to do so, had left her. The following day he came again with four men, but they could not do any thing with her. He then came for me, but did not mention that he had tried to get her himself before.

I still insisted upon her being let out of the barn; he finally yielded, and let the cow out, and at last I succeeded in getting her into the street. She did her best to get by me and back into the barn; but finally she decided that she would start on the way to Quincy. After a good deal of running, dodging and trouble, I got her as far as the Quincy Point Bridge. The bridge was being repaired, and one side of it was torn up. She decided that she would not go on to the bridge, and insisted upon getting

past me and back to her home again. When she found she could not, she jumped the fence; I also jumped it as quick as she did. It being an open field, and finding that I was equal to her, and that she could not get by me, she made for the river, and started to swim for Germantown. The tide was running out very strong, and I knew it would land her on a point of land about a mile away by water, but there being a bend in the river it was about a mile and a half by land; so it was necessary for me to do some quick running to reach the point where she would come ashore as soon as she did.

I got there, nevertheless, and met her as she was coming out of the water. She was nearly exhausted, but I drove her back to the bridge, and she went over it very willingly this time, and I drove her to her new owner without any further delays. Mr. Spear thanked me very kindly for bringing her to him, and then told me what a lot of trouble he had with her himself. I merely mention these incidents to show what one person can sometimes accomplish when several fail.

In the fifth year of my stay with Mr. Arnold, one day while at work in the slaughter-house, he dropped dead of heart disease. His death put a stop to all further business, as there was no one to take his place, consequently I was out of a situation, and I was obliged to look about for something to do.

About that time there was a great deal of stone freighted between Quincy and Boston. I got a chance to go to work on the sloop "Granite," for the season,

which is about eight months, and received eighteen dollars per month and my board. With the money that I earned in this way, and with my oldest brother's help, we were able to pay my mother's expenses, so that she did not have to go out washing any more. The next season I went aboard the sloop "Maria Hannah," which carried about one hundred tons, and was also used to freight stone between Quincy and Boston.

IS MADE A CAPTAIN.

The following season I went with the "Cyrus," and staid with her about three seasons, receiving twenty-eight dollars per month. At the end of that time the the captain went to California, and I was put in captain of the sloop. I remained with her as captain for four years. I then tried to buy a share of the vessel, but she was paying the owners so well they did not care to sell her.

BUYS A SLOOP AND GIVES HIS NOTE.—PUSHING AHEAD. AN UNEXPECTED DEMAND FOR PAYMENT.

There was at this time an old sloop for sale, the "Robert," which was freighting stone from Cape Ann to Boston. My brother and I bought her; we did not have money enough to wholly pay for her, so we paid part down, and gave our note for the remainder. The note was payable in three months; we told the owner we did not think it posible to pay it at the end of that time, but he said it would not matter, as the note could be renewed.

We were very ignorant in regard to notes at that time, and trusted to what he said in regard to the matter. When the note came due we were notified from the bank to pay it.

Mr. Daniel Cram of Boston, owed us about three hundred dollars for work that we were doing for him, but it was not to be paid until the first of the month, and the demand on the note was made about the middle. Mr. Cram told us that if we would allow him twenty dollars he would raise us the money to pay the note. We allowed him that amount, and paid the note. I said then I would never again sign my name to another note in my business, and although for ten years, during war times, I did from one hundred and fifty thousand to two hundred thousand dollars worth of work a year, I never used another note in my business. The quarrymen, such as Rockport Granite Co., Lanesville Granite Co. and quarry quarrymen would trust me for from ten thousand to fifty thousand dollars worth of stone, without asking me for a payment.

SEA-WALL AND WHARF CONTRACTS.

After running these sloops I began to take contracts for building sea-walls and wharves, and have followed this business ever since. The first large job that I took was a contract for William Evans, to the amount of $150,000, for a sea-wall over a mile in length, at Albany street, Boston, and which took me seven years to complete. The other contractors were provoked because he

gave the job to me, and refused to help me with their sloops or stone. It was so large a job that it required about ten sloops to do the work. Mr. Evans told me to buy a sloop if I could find one, and he would pay for it, and that I might pay him whenever I could. I looked around and found the "Daniel Webster," bought it and went to work. After I got started, the other contractors were willing to help me, and things went along smoothly.

I have always considered Mr. Evans one of my best friends, and think I have every reason to consider him as such; he was really the one that gave me my first start in sea-wall building.

I had a purchase block fall from aloft, some fifty feet, on board the "Daniel Webster." It struck me a glancing blow on my head, then struck me on my shoulder, broke three ribs, and injured my kidneys to such an extent that I have never been able to do any heavy work since.

LIST OF SEA-WALLS AND WHARVES.

The following is a list of the sea-walls and wharves that I have built:—

400 feet of sea-wall for Julius Adams; 400 feet for Francis Heirs; 400 feet for Curtis Wharf; 100 feet at Russell's Wharf, all at Federal street, South Boston. 300 feet for Batchelder Bros., at Broadway Bridge, for coal wharf; 300 feet of sea-wall rebuilt at Wales' Wharf; 200 feet built at Piper's Wharf, and 200 feet built at Tirrell's Wharf. The above seawalls and wharves have all been taken for the new Union Station.

The sea-wall that I have already mentioned at Albany street for William Evans, contractor with the city of Boston, over a mile in length, thirteen feet wide at the bottom, four feet wide at the top, and fourteen feet high; between 300 and 400 feet at Long Wharf; about 900 feet at the Standard Sugar Refinery; about 600 feet in length for the South Boston Iron Co., at First street, South Boston; nearly a mile of sea-wall at the rear of Beacon street, on Charles River; the sea-wall at Mystic River, for Maine and Lowell R. R., about a mile and a half long, tweny-one feet high, twelve feet wide at the bottom and four feet wide at top; 1700 feet of heavy sea-wall for Boston Gas Light Co., for the foundation of their works at Commercial Point; 500 feet for Bradley Fertilizer Co., at Weymouth; between 400 and 500 feet at the Hoosac Tunnel Dock and Elevator, for the Fitchburg R. R.; 300 feet at Commercial Wharf; 500 feet at [illegible] Wharf; 800 feet at Battery Wharf; 300 feet at National Dock at East Boston; 500 feet at First street, for heirs of Francis Hayes, South Boston; 300 feet for Wire Works, South Boston; 300 feet for Rogers, South Boston; 400 feet for Walworth Manufacturing Co., South Boston; 400 feet for Boston Wharf Co.; 100 feet for Coleman Coal Wharf, Cambridge; 100 feet for Richmond and Bacon Coal Wharf, Cambridge; 400 feet for Dr. E. R. Bartlett, coal wharf, Charlestown; 500 feet for Parker & Palmer, log-wood wharf, Charlestown; 150 feet at Lockwood's Wharf, Charlestown; 250 feet at Winslow's Lumber Wharf, Charles street; 600 feet for ex-Mayor Stone, Charlestown;

100 feet for Metcalf at Charlestown; 150 feet at Winthrop Beach, for the town of Winthrop; 200 feet at Salt Works, Chelsea; 300 feet for Magee Stove Works; 300 feet for City of Roxbury; 300 feet for Dow's Carpet Works, Roxbury; 1200 feet of rip-rap wall for sewer at Cow Pasture, for city of Boston; 200 feet of sea-wall for Lumber Wharf, Malden; 400 feet for Wicke's Lumber Wharf, East Boston; 200 feet for Fish Wharf; 800 feet of wall for government at Lovell's Island, Boston Harbor, for beakwater; 300 feet for Lockwood Manufacturing Co., East Boston; 600 feet for So. Boston Iron Co., City Point; 100 feet for Breed and others at Lynn; 600 feet for Lynn Gas Light Co.; 800 feet for Burnham's coal wharf, Dorchester Bay; 200 feet for town of Hull; 250 feet for Hull Yacht Club at Hull; 500 feet for government at Stratton Island; 400 feet for Oscar Withington's coal wharf, Cambridge Canal; 500 feet of sea-wall for Cambridge Improvement Co., Cambridge Canal; 260 feet for Boston Real Estate Trust at Russia Wharf; 200 feet at Stetson's wharf, South Boston; 100 feet for Capt. James at Hull; 200 feet of state wall at Four Point Channel for Clapp & Ballou; 200 feet of sea-wall for Batchelder Bros.' coal wharf, Fort Hill Wharf; 2 abutments for N. Y. & N. E. Railroad at South Bay; 100 feet of sea-wall at Marblehead; 100 feet at Isle of Shoals, for Poore; Wharf of 200 feet at Bordon street, for the city of Boston, at East Boston; 100 feet for Mr. Tower, at Cambridge Canal; 300 feet at Weymouth, and 300 feet for wharf at Revere Sugar Refinery Co., at Somerville.

WAR TIMES ARE ON.—THE CAPTAIN ISN'T IDLE.—LANDING THE BIG GUNS.

During the war I handled a great many cannon, shot, shell and gun-carriages for the government from the South Boston Iron Co. They had a contract for 250 cannon that weighed twenty-five tons each; they were called the fifteen inch Rodman Cannon. I took them from the South Boston Iron Co., and landed them on all the forts around Boston and New York, such as Fort Popham and Fort Knox, on the Penobscot and Kennebec Rivers, Dutch Island and Fort Adams at Newport, Governor's Island and Clark's Island at New York. Fort Segwick and the fort at the Gurnet Light at Plymouth; Fort Warren, Fort Winthrop and Fort Independence at Boston. I also loaded three ships to go to Chili for the Chilian government. Each ship carried ten cannon, weighing twenty-five tons each, with shot, shell and gun-carriages. It required 300 cords of wood for dunnage to stow the guns so they would go around Cape Horn safely.

The stevedores of Boston tried to prevent my loading the guns. The South Boston Iron Co. went two hundred thousand dollar bonds for me to the owners of the ships, that they would go safe, and they did, arriving there safe and sound,—all in good condition.

In carrying the guns to different forts, we occasionally found a wharf that was considered unsafe to land guns upon. I remember one such incident, which I will mention. It occurred at Dutch Island, Newport, where we were to land seven twenty-five ton cannon. The engineer at Fort Adams examined the wharf and condemned it,—said it wasn't safe to land the guns upon. The Quartermaster at Boston sent an engineer down there, and he also condemned it. The Quartermaster then asked me to go down and inspect the wharf. I went down and looked it over, and found it was a pile-wharf about 30 feet square; it was built on a ledge of rock that ran out into the river, and I decided that it was very risky to land heavy guns on such a structure. As I found it very well braced with four inch plank well spiked together, I thought I would run the risk of getting the guns on the wharf, providing I received sufficient pay for doing it. I returned to Boston and told the Quartermaster that I thought it could be done by using great care; he asked me what I would land the guns on solid ground at the Island for. I told him I wanted seven thousand dollars for landing the seven guns. They were to be taken from the South Boston Iron Co.; he told me to go ahead and do the job.

I loaded the guns aboard the vessels at South Boston. As there were no purchase blocks at the Island I had to use skids to get them from the vessels to the wharf. The first gun that I put out caused the wharf to settle about a foot, and to all appearances it seemed to be going all to pieces; several planks split before it stopped settling. We finally got the gun off the wharf and landed it upon solid ground. After the first strain the wharf did not settle or split any further, but stood the weight of the other guns very nicely, and they were deposited

safely upon the Island. By the wharf standing so well I was able to make a fair profit on the contract.

NARROW ESCAPE FROM A SHOT FROM ONE OF UNCLE SAM'S BIG GUNS.

Although I did not go to war in the rebellion, I had three brothers who did go, but I was detained at home in order to supply the forts with guns. On one occasion I had been to carry some guns to Fort Independence, Boston harbor, with the sloop "Jennie Lind," and was returning about dusk in the early part of the evening. The rules at that time were that no vessel should leave or come into the harbor after sundown. I kept close up to the South Boston shore, hoping that the U. S. Cutter, that was stationed in the harbor to prevent all vessels from coming or going, would not see me. I proceeded on my way for a while, when a cannon was fired. I kept straight on my course, when presently a second shot was fired, and then a third which struck right under our fore-foot. I then put the wheel down, let the vessel up into the wind, lowered the jib and anchored. There was great cheering from over two hundred vessels which lay anchored in the harbor. I took two men, and we rowed in a small boat out to the cutter to explain to the captain why we were there. He asked me why I did not stop the first time he fired; I replied that I did not know the firing was meant for me. He said he guessed I found out that he meant me when the third shot was fired, and asked where it struck; I told him under our fore-foot. He said I should

have kept up near him and explained my being there, then I would have been allowed to go on unmolested. I was allowed to go back to my sloop and proceed on my way to South Boston. Even if I did not go to war I was in one action at least, and was fired upon by a U. S. cutter.

THE "DANIEL WEBSTER" CAPSIZES IN A SQUALL.—THE CAPTAIN'S NARROW ESCAPE.

While coming up to Boston one day with the "Daniel Webster," loaded with one hundred tons of stone, we were suddenly caught in a squall. We had got up just above Castle Island in Boston Harbor. We let go the main and jib sheets, and did all we could to keep her from capsizing, but the squall was so heavy it was impossible to save her, and she went over. I was to the leeward side of the vessel, and when it capsized I was caught between two poles which were jammed against the corner of the house on the quarter-deck. I pulled on the tiller rope which was made fast to the windward side, to try to save myself. The more I pulled the tighter I became wedged. My brothers were up on the vessel's side, and I heard them ask where I was. I told them that I was wedged in and could not get away, and would have to drown, as the vessel was sinking fast. When the water got up as far as my neck, I let go the rope giving up all hopes of being saved, when the poles suddenly separated and let me up out of the water. I succeeded in getting on to the vessel's side, and a tug-boat took us up to Long Wharf.

I secured two barges and a large spar which we hitch-

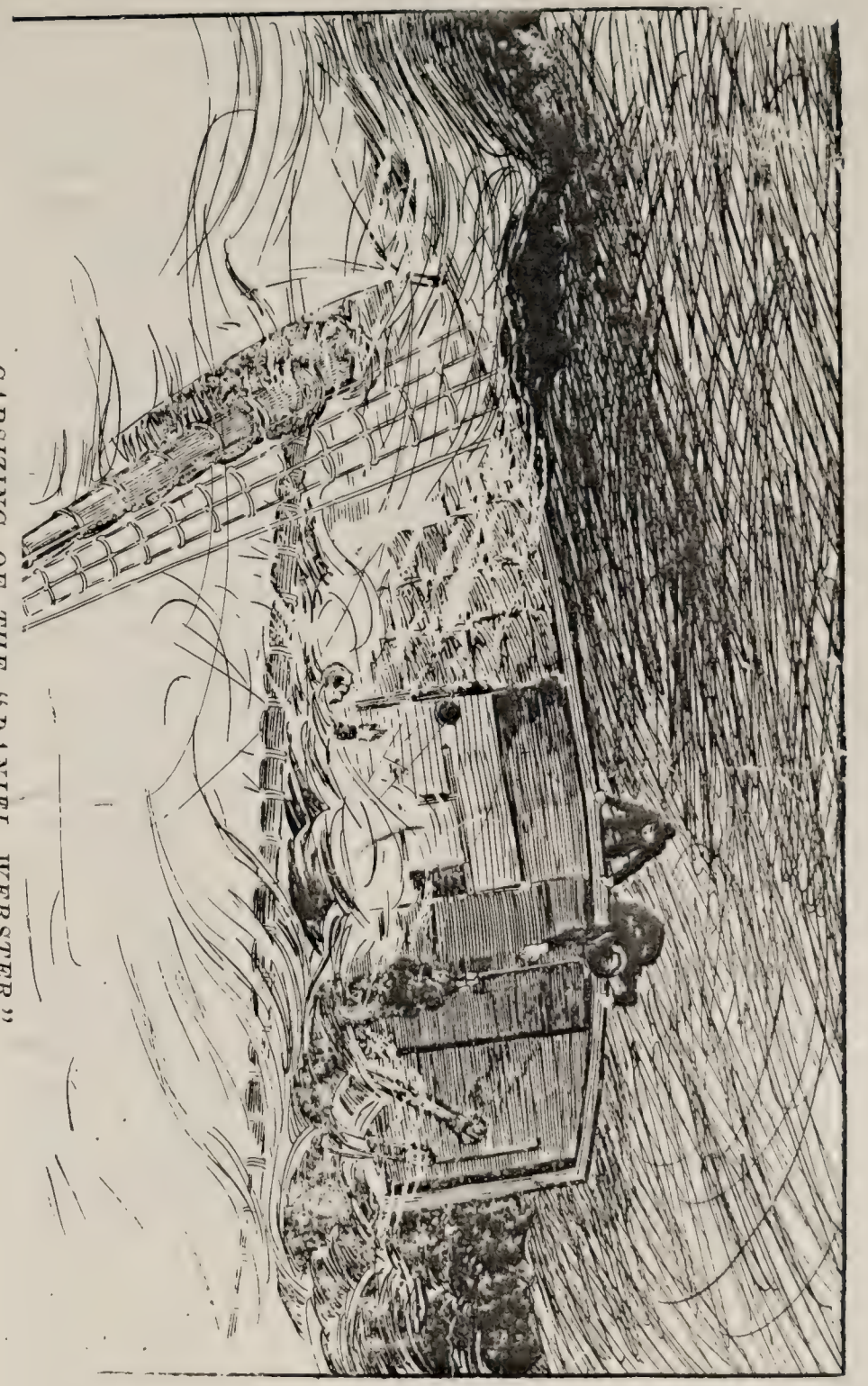
ed on to the vessel at low water, and at high water we landed her on to the flats and pumped the water out of her, and she was ready for work in twenty-four hours from the time she capsized, although the entire freight of stone was lost.

I found when all was over, that in pulling so hard I had torn the quick from the nails so that my fingers was bleeding freely. This is the narrowest escape from drowning that I ever had, although I followed the water for eighteen years; and, by the way, this same sloop, the "Daniel Webster," was lost in the great storm of Jan. 3, 1898, being owned at that time by the Pigeon Cove Granite Co., and three men were also lost with her. She lay at Pigeon Cove, but the sea took her out of the Cove on to the rocks and she was wrecked with several other vessels that also went down in this same storm.

THE CAPTAIN MAKES A COMPANY OF SOLDIERS RETREAT IN BAD ORDER.—DEFENDING THE FARM FROM AN INVASION.

At the time of the State Muster, some thirty years ago, at Sharon Plains, I had a little difficulty with the soldiers.

My farm joined the muster-field, and I had about half an acre of water-melons. It being in the fall of the year they were about ready for market. My brother-in-law, who was living with me, came into the house very much excited, and said there was a whole company of



CAPSIZING OF THE "DANIEL WEBSTER."

soldiers in my water-melon field. I rushed out of the house, down into the field, and on the impulse of the moment I aimed and fired a revolver, which I carried with me, right into the midst of the one hundred soldiers. I I saw no bad effect of my shot however, for they all started and run, jumping the fence into the pasture like a flock of sheep. That is how I made one hundred soldiers run, but I would have given one thousand dollars a minute after I fired the revolver if I had not done it. My advice to all, both men and boys is this, to keep cool, and always think well before you act. This hasty act of mine was a very imprudent thing to do; if I had happened to have hurt any one it would have caused me much trouble and regret.

I never heard any thing of the affair until I wanted to use my farm-wagon, and found one of the wheels missing. We did not find it until the next spring; then we were plowing, and found it buried in the field. I was well satisfied to have the affair end in a joke rather than a tragedy.

MID-NIGHT LUNCH SERVED TO AN INSANE MAN.

One night, some thirty years ago, while I lived on Sharon Plains, there came a rap on the kitchen door. I had retired, it being about half past eleven. My oldest son went to the door; he did not open it, but asked who was there. A man replied that he wanted to come in. My son asked him who he was and what his business was; he insisted upon coming in, and my son insisted upon

knowing his errand first. He would say nothing about himself, and he at last decided that he would come into the house that night at any rate.

After letting them argue for about ten minutes, I decided I had better go down and settle the matter. I told my son to step away from the door; I opened it with my left hand and held my revolver in my right hand. When the door was open I beheld a very tall man about thirty years old. I held the revolver about a foot from his head, and demanded to know his errand there at that time of night. He calmly looked at the revolver, and then showed me a white oak stick about two feet long, and shaking it in my face, replied that he would rather have that stick than a dozen revolvers. I asked him why he wanted to come in, and he said he was hungry and wanted something to eat. I told him he should have said so before, and invited him to come in. He sat down in the kitchen, and my wife gave him some bread and meat and a glass of milk. After he had eaten I told him it was mid-night, and time all honest people were abed, and before I could say more he quickly replied: "And all rogues turned out doors." I then said: "It is time for you to go." He said, "all right," and went out. Later on, some of the neighbors heard him, and he was making a great deal of noise. The next morning he was in Foxboro' making so much trouble that they shut him up. During the forenoon the officers from Taunton arrived, looking for him. It seemed he had escaped from the Taunton Insane Hospital only the

day before, and was one of the most violent patients that they had. Had I not dealt with him in the firm manner that I did he might have caused serious trouble, and I considered myself fortunate in getting rid of him so easily.

A CIVIL ENGINEER'S POOR JUDGMENT.

During my experience in sea-wall building I have had some very bad foundations to put the sea-walls upon. I will mention one that I built in South Boston, for the estate of Francis B. Hayes. There was some three hundred feet in length of wall to build; part of the foundation was good, the remainder was some twenty-five feet in depth of soft mud. The piles were driven for it when I told the engineer it was not safe to put the wall upon; he thought it was. Mr. Hayes being dead, I sent for the trustees to come down and see it. One of the trustees was Mr. Choate, president of the Old Colony R. R. I do not remember the names of the other two. We all met with the engineer at seven o'clock in the morning. Mr. Choate asked what the trouble was. I told him that it was a very poor foundation, and unless he put rods through the pile foundation eight feet apart and eighty feet back into the solid ground, that his wall would not stand. Mr. Choate, then turning to the engineer, asked him if that was a fact? The engineer replied that he considered it a good, safe foundation. Mr. Choate said as I was at work under the engineer's direction, I was supposed to do just as he said. I repeated that the wall

would not be safe, and should build it under protest, and asked him to make a memorandum of the fact, that, I said it would not stand; I then built the wall. They began to fill it after it was built, and had it partly filled when the wall began to go out, as I had predicted. They then put in the rods as I had suggested. It cost them three thousand dollars more than it would have done had they taken my advice at first.

SUPPLIES THE STONE FOR THE FOUNDATION OF THE BOSTON & PROVIDENCE FREIGHT DEPOT AND PASSENGER STATION.

In figuring large contracts there is always more or less competition. One instance in my experience being at the time the stone for the foundation of the Boston & Providence freight depot, at Park Square was furnished. The amount of the contract was over forty-two thousand dollars and it was to be completed at the end of three months, and if not completed in that time the contractor was to forfeit seventy-five dollars per day until it was completed.

There were six other bids beside mine,—Rockport Granite Co., and others. These six had agreed to consolidate and do the work together if any one of them should get the contract. Mine was the only independent bid, and being the lowest, the contract was awarded to me. The other parties agreed that they should not sell me any stone without my paying them twice what it was worth, and of course that would prevent my doing

the work without suffering a severe loss. I found one party outside of these, Trumble & Co., who agreed to furnish me all the stone at a fair price.

Among the stone to go into the contract were thirty-two to be used for door-steps, to weigh over ten tons each; they were four feet wide, sixteen feet long and two feet thick. The stone all come along nicely until the large ones; the stone men thought they were sure of these as they had reserved a large stone for them, but when they went to get them out they found a seam running through the center, and they were obliged to notify me that it would be impossible to get out a single one.

I them asked the Rockport Granite Co. what they would charge to furnish the stone, for the time was very short on my contract, it being within three weeks of the time set for its completion. They wanted two hundred dollars apiece. As I had only figured them at one hundred dollars each, I could not possibly pay them their price. I decided to go to Maine to see Pierce & Rowe, who had a large quarry there. I took my brother-in-law with me; we went on the night boat, and arrived there the next morning.

It being late in the season, about Thanksgiving time, I found the quarry closed for the winter, and the superintendent had discharged his two hundred men only the day before. He said he wished I had came one day sooner, as he had one large stone from which he could cut the whole thirty-two. He said he would go around among his men and see what he could do for me, and

wanted me to meet him at his office at noon. I met him as requested and he told me if I would pay the price that he charged, he could get the men to go to work on them. He asked me one hundred and twenty-five dollars each, delivered at Boston. He agreed to put on two gangs of men, to work night and day, and thought he could get them cut in one week. I agreed to pay him his price, and I went to Portland and found two vessels. The captains did not want to go, but I finally persuaded them into doing so by offering them fifty dollars each for themselves, besides their regular price.

By the time the vessels reached the quarry, the stones were ready, and they loaded them for Boston. I left my brother-in-law down there for fear the vessels might freeze in while loading, and in case they did he was to telegraph me at Boston so I could send down a tow-boat to break the ice and get them out. The night the vessels loaded the canal did freeze over, and my brother-in-law started to telegraph me, when the firm's men, of whom I bought the stone, offered their assistance by breaking the ice and getting the vessels out into the river. They started with a fair wind and had a quick run to Boston.

I landed the last stone on to the work the very last day of the time allowed me on the contract. So you see, that although the other six companies did all they could to prevent my progress, I succeeded in completing the contract on time. Mr. John Leighton, superintendent on the work, said that this stone was delivered the

quickest of any contract that he ever superintended.

The B. & P. R. R. Co. knew the difficulties that I had had to contend with from the other companies, and after the contract had all been paid for, they sent me a check as a present of nine hundred dollars, which showed that they appreciated my efforts to keep to my agreement.

I also will add that I had the contract to furnish the stone to build the Boston & Providence Passenger Station, but they being in a great hurry to get it completed, Superintendent Folsom asked me if I had not as leaves have the Cape Ann Granite Co. help me, and I said yes, and so we did the job together.

LOOKING BACK.

It may be interesting to some to know how I bought my first house. While I was running the sloop "Daniel Webster," Wyman Abercrombie, a grocer in Quincy, and of whom I bought my groceries, came to me one day and wanted me to buy a house that one of his friends who had gone to California, had to sell. The price was eight hundred dollars. As I told him I had no money to buy it with, he said that they would take a mortgage for the larger part of it. I had one hundred dollars, but as it was in the fall of the year, and I should have no more work until spring, I thought it necessary to keep that to carry my family through the winter with. He advised me to buy the house, pay my hundred dollars down on it, and said that he would give me credit for my winter's

groceries and provisions. It was the best advice I ever received. Instead of waiting to make big payments, I paid five dollars, or whatever I could spare at a time, and in about two years I had my first house paid for. In the spring after I bought this house I was only fifty dollars in debt for groceries and provisions to the man who gave me credit. During the winter I had shovelled snow when ever there was an opportunity; the rest of the time I chopped wood for a man who owned a swamp five miles from Quincy, called "Purgatory Swamp." This man offered sixty cents a cord for cutting the wood. As it was only half grown, owing to its having been burned over, and with my poor experience at wood-cutting, I was only able to cut about a half cord a day. It being so far away, I was obliged to leave home at five o'clock in the morning, and carry my dinner, which consisted of potatoes which were frozen by dinner time, a couple of slices of salt pork, and a little bread.

CASTS ANCHOR AT SHARON.

My health failing me so fast, owing to my accident the doctors advised me to get away from the salt water. After much inquiry to find some place, both healthy and handy for my business, I finally decided to come up to Sharon. Looking around, I found a place on Sharon Plains that suited me, which I bought. It was a farm consisting of sixty acres of land, and is now known as the "Hen Farm," having at present some fourteen hundred feet of hen-houses upon it.

I moved my family from Quincy, and lived on the farm twelve years. During this time I built four cheap houses to let, upon a part of the farm, and my health constantly improved after coming to Sharon, away from the salt water. I sold the homestead and part of the land, and bought what is now known as the Horrigan farm, near East Foxboro'. At that time I was very anxious that my five boys should be brought up on a farm; as this one contained two hundred and ten acres, it had ample room for them all to learn farming in all its branches. On this farm we succeeded admirable, keeping from twenty to thirty cows, and selling between two hundred and three hundred dollars worth of milk each month. After having lived there four years, Mr. Horrigan came one day, and having looked over the farm asked me if I would sell it, and what my price would be. I gave him my price, and after talking some little time over it, we made a trade. I have always regretted selling it, and wished many times that I had let well enough alone, and kept this farm.

I afterwards bought a farm of sixty acres on Moose Hill. We kept cows there also, and sold over one hundred dollars worth of milk each month. We lived upon this place seven years, then receiving a good price for it, I sold it to E. P. Brown, a Boston lawyer.

We then moved to Sharon Center, where we remained about a year while I was having my house built on the old Lake House estate of thirteen acres, situated on the border of Lake Massapoag. This place is considered one

of the finest in Sharon, and commands one of the most beautiful views of the lake.

After remaining there between six and seven years I sold this estate, and moved back into Sharon Center to my house on Washington Place, where I now reside.

After I moved to Sharon I purchased real estate from time to time as I had the opportunity. One morning when I was going to the station I met Mr. Shepherd Carpenter, who drove the express team. While talking with him about land, he mentioned some good land up around the lake, owned by Mr. Barnabus Capen, that was for sale, where the Massaboag Lake Hotel now stands.

I went up there on a Wednesday, met Mr. Capen, and looked it over. I told him to stake out what he intended to sell, and give his price on the following Saturday, which he did. I decided to take it and paid him some money to bind the bargain. I saw Mr. Hervey Billings the following day, and he went with me to see the land, and asked me what I intended doing with it. I told him that I thought of organizing a company and building a hotel. He expressed his desire to become one of the company, and he, his brother Henry Billings, Thomas Decatur, D. C. Sanger, a Mr. Cook from Taunton, and myself comprised the company. We set about building streets, clearing up the ground, etc., preparatoy to building the hotel. When all was ready I suggested building it by contract. Mr. Decatur favored building by the day, he superintending it, as he intended to hire it when completed. I objected to having my money spent that way,

and I said if I had anything to do with it, it must be built by contract. Not being able to agree, we put it to vote to see which way it should be built, with the result of four to two in favor of day work.

I then told Mr. Decatur that he must either buy or sell as I would not agree to day work. He asked me what I would give or take. I said I would give or take six hundred dollars more than it cost at first. He asked me how long I would give him to find a customer; I replied: "Twelve days from today at noon." At the last moment he met me at Mechanics' Exchange, Boston, with the money. Thus ended my interest in the Lake Massapoag land speculation. They proceeded, and built the Massagoag Hotel their own way, but I doubt if I had not bought the land and organized the company of there being a hotel there today. As there is a great deal of doubt in the minds of many in regard as to who first bought the property, I will add the following letter which speaks for itself:—

Dear Captain:—

In response to your request that I state as to whom I sold the property, consisting of about sixty acres, bordering on Lake Massapoag, and on part of which the present Massapoag Hotel stands, I desire to say that my whole bargain was made with you; that I showed you the property on a certain day of the week, and at your request looked over the property, and on a day soon following, you again visited the property and accepted my terms, paying down ten dollars on a partial payment, and the bargain was closed.

Yours truly,

B. D. CAPEN.

Witnessed by
SANFORD WATERS BILLINGS.

During my stay in Sharon, for the last thirty-five years, I have bought and sold considerable property. At the present time I own the following real estate:—At Sharon Plains, three tenement houses with stables; at Sharon Heights, one tenement house; at the Center, the houses on South Main Street, occupied by Mrs. Capen, Mrs. Elliott, Mr. Goldberg, O. H. Derry, and my own residence; also the blacksmith-shop occupied by O. H. Derry, and the house on Billings street, occupied by H. T. B. Derry. I have also one tenement house at Hyde Park with stable. I own forty acres of land, more or less, at Sharon Plains, and such lands as go with each house.

ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE MECHANICS' EXCHANGE.

I was one of the first members of the Mechanics' Exchange, having been a member for over forty years. The Exchange is the origin of all Master Builders' Associations in this country. I was a member of that organization when they held their meetings around the pump below the old State House on State Street, which has long since been removed; we afterwards met in a basement on State Street. From time to time as the membership increased it became necessary to secure larger quarters, and the present location is at 17 Otis Street.

I feel that I cannot close this book without refering to another very good friend of mine, William P. Hunt, President of the South Boston, Iron Co. He has done a great deal for me in various ways, such as recommending

my work, going bonds for me, and in every way possible putting work in my hands. It was he who went two hundred thousand dollars bond for me to the owners of the vessels that carried the guns to Chili. In fact, he has always been, and is today a true friend to me in every way.

When I think of these kind friends of mine, these lines always come to my mind:—

Remember well, and bear in mind,
A faithful friend, is hard to find;
And when you find one, just and true,
Don't change an old one for an new.

And last, but by no means least, I will say, that my success in life has been largely due to my being blessed with an excellent and amiable wife. Another blessing that I certainly feel thankful for, is that my children, two daughters and five sons, have all been spared to me. My mother spent her declining years in my home, living to be within three months of ninety years of age. She received from my wife every care and comfort that could be given her. My wife has been a true help-mate for nearly fifty years, ever ready to lend a helping hand, never complaining when things looked dark and discouraging, but always willing and anxious to see a silver lining to every cloud. This little poem taught me by my mother in my childhood days, coincides in many respects with my own home life:—

A rich man one morning was taking his walk;
He met with a poor man, and freely did talk.

He asked him many questions, and questions at large,
Concerning his wages, and family charge.
"You have many children I freely do know,
Your work it is hard, and your wages are low,
Now, pray tell me true what you do, to maintain them
As well as you do?"

"Why, I reap and I sow, I plant and I hoe,
And sometime a hedging and ditching I go;
My wife, she is willing to pull on the yoke,
We live like two lambs, and we never provoke.
And when I come home from my labor at night,
My wife and my children they are my delight;
To see them come running with rattle and noise,
O! these are the riches a poor man enjoys."

This little book I have prepared to present to my family and friends on my seventieth birthday, March 10, 1898, with my best wishes for the prosperity and success to all who may read it.

I hope the reader will not misconstrue the true imports of this narrative of my life, in regard to my financial affairs. Although I started with nothing, I have by no means amassed a fortune, as one might think from the amount of work I have done. My contracts have been large to be sure, but the profits have been small, owing to so much competition. I have been able to bring up my large family of seven children, and from time to time have bought a few tenement houses, and taken a few

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